**Chapter 1**

The focus of this chapter was to make a clear distinction between differentiated design and allowing students to take the easy route in learning and develop a crutch. Differentiated design is meant to assist students in such a way that it helps them to develop the skills they are lacking, such as a planner to help with organization or access to student assistants who can assist them when the teacher is unavailable. The ideal tactics are ones that can be easily made available to any students who wish to utilize them, even if they were not the originally intended targets of the teacher. Ineffectual tactics are ones that purposely make the lessons easier, and show no attempt to strengthen the weak skill of the student. These tactics only placate the student, and later become apparent when the student is not given the same leeway by another teacher and ultimately falls behind in class.

I was very divided in this chapter. On one hand, I readily agree that students should be helped, not carried. I had teachers that were willing to work with me in staying organized and helped me develop excellent skills in note taking. However, there in lies the purpose: developing skills. If I see a pattern in the struggles of students, I know I need to do something to help them. Whatever I do needs to not substitute that skill, but help my students to develop their own tactics. On the other hand, I was very disturbed by the idea that taking away what helps a student will make them stronger. Tools like organizers, glasses, and artificial limbs are not things you just decide to take away one day because some might view it as an advantage. These tools are meant to assist and help put the student on and equal level.

**Chapter 2**

The focus of this chapter is determining whether a student has mastered a topic, partially mastered, or simply memorized part of it. In order to determine this, a teacher needs to have consistent evidence in a student’s work of successfully demonstrating this skill, and who is then able to take that skills and investigate it a level deeper. From there a student should be able to self-asses their progress see their own development of that topic. A single grade is only a snapshot of an instant of that skill, and in some cases it is by pure luck that they receive that grade. By breaking down a standard, you are able to figure out what exactly defines mastery of that skill. By doing this the level of mastery can be presented in an easy to understand way for students and faculty alike. Before a teacher can begin moving students ahead and assisting with differentiated instruction, there needs to be an understanding of what they need to obtain as a learner.

In school I have never felt comfortable in saying that I had mastered something, even when I was very proficient, I could never bring myself to say mastered. Many of my teachers stood by the idea that you never truly mastered a skill, because you never really stopped learning. In many ways I feel I would agree, because learning is not a race to the finish. At the same time, I feel it would be unfair to proficient students to deny them the title of mastery. In my own classroom, I feel I would have to make it clear that mastery does not mean that there is no work. It merely means that they have moved beyond the traditional learning path and need a greater challenge to be stimulated.

**Chapter 3**

The focus of this chapter is the idea of using assessments to gauge the level of students and then to be used later so as to show the students their progress throughout the trimester or semester. These kinds of pre assessments also allow for the teacher to give back feedback early enough that students feel confident about what they know they need to learn right from the start. Teachers can also use these results to decide what needs to be removed from or added to their lesson plans, based on where they show proficiency and weakness. This is also to help prevent needless repetition, which will ultimately disinterest the students and cause them to lose focus, and potentially become a disruptive aspect to the class.

I find this to be a very smart way of designing a classroom around what the students know and need, though there are some aspects of the start of the year test that I do not agree with. While I agree with the assessing aspect, giving them the exact same test at the end of the year feels rather counterproductive to me. We want to encourage the students to develop their thinking process, not just memorize what is on the test and forgo any other information we might give them. While they certainly need to understand the standards of their grade, they also need to begin taking in information that will be pertinent to the following year.

**Chapter 4**

The focus of this chapter was ways in which you can track, record, and review student’s progress in a manner that adapts to multiple levels of learning. The first strategy talked about student-compiled portfolios, where students would pick out assignments that showed great improvement and difficulty throughout the allotted time, and would then have to justify why they picked that piece. The second strategy focused on rubrics, which are traditionally administered by the teacher before an assignment begins so as to show the students what is expected of them as learners, and what qualifies them as exceeding the standard. This method also helps the teacher to break down a standard and make sure that everything about the assignment will fulfill what is required of their school standard. The third strategy focused on self-assessment, a strategy that can either stand-alone or accompany one of the other strategies at the end of an assignment. Here a student is forced to look at their own work and take responsibility for the grade they believed they earned. This can help the teacher to help assess whether or not the student understood the standard of what was expected for that particular lesson.

Out of the three standards, I find myself mostly being drawn to the rubric and self-assessment strategies, mostly because I found them to be the most effective in my own education. Every unit would receive it’s own general rubric, and then I would develop sub-rubrics for projects. However, the sub-rubrics would only be slightly altered and more specific version of the unit rubric. Self-assessments would be required at the end of every unit, because I feel that one after every project might feel a bit repetitive and seem like busy work to my students.

**Chapter 5**

The focus of this chapter is on the idea of providing options and alternatives for students who might be on different learning levels. One of the strategies talked about in this chapter is the splitting up of lessons into tiers. A teacher starts off by setting a standard bar for the entire class, which means that a teacher must not undermine the intelligence of the students. At the same time, a teacher must make sure not to set the bar too high, or else they risk receiving inaccurate data about the intelligence of their students. Setting a median bar allows for teachers to easily add information for those students who require more of a challenge, and further break down a standard for students who are struggling.

This practice is something I would certainly try to integrate into my classroom. However, I am concerned with how students will receive when they are told they are beneath the class standard and will require alternative work. Some students would take that as an insult, and feel their peers will label them as stupid because they fall under the “remedial” category. There is also the parental aspect to think about. Some parents may blame the teacher because their child is beneath the standard, or why their student is not being placed above the standard. While I do agree that students should be challenged and helped as needed, I struggle with balancing the ethical and emotional aspect that attaches to it, and the stigma that follows leveled instruction.

**Chapter 6**

The focus of this chapter was on developing effective test questions that present and informative and accurate representation of the student’s understanding of the subject. There are two general types of questions, forced choice and constructed choice. Forced choice is when the teacher gives the students a selection of answers to choose from, usually seen in multiple choice or true/false tests. Constructed choice is when the teacher presents the student with a prompt, which forces the student to utilize what they have learned in order to best define or explain the prompt. With either kind of test, the teacher wants to design it as efficiently and straightforward as possible. By doing so the student will not feel as if they are solving a riddle, and can focus more on exhibiting their knowledge without being tripped up by trick words or confusing vocabulary. It is also advised that a series of smaller tests throughout the course of the year be utilized, instead of one giant test at the end. This puts less anxiety on the student, and will provide a more accurate snapshot.

I have never been a good tester, but over the years I have found that when teachers utilize the strategies talked about in this chapter, I felt more comfortable and confident with my answers. While a large part of tests does rely on the student to take responsibility by studying and taking notes in class, a teacher cannot turn a test into a mind game and expect good results. Within the chapter there was a suggestion to prepare multiple versions of the test, but with different difficulty levels. I do like the idea of having a more difficult test, so that if a student has shown to understand above the standard, I can measure their progress in a way that accurately shows their advanced knowledge level. However, I am hesitant to make an easier version of the test for struggling students, due to the fact that I don’t feel it would be the most accurate representation.